

Struggle For Survival

New Heber Settlement Established In Upper Provo Valley

THE NORTH wind slanted the wet snowflakes onto the damp ground as the two men heavily bundled in coats and shawls, reined in their horses at London Springs.

"Hello!" they shouted to the men urging their teams along through the storm. "What are you doing here?"

"Plowing a little," one of them answered.

"Oh, you can't raise any grain here," laughed one of the horsemen. "It's too cold!"

"Well, we're going to try and trust to Providence," replied one of the plowmen.

Such was the determination and faith of the first settlers at what is now Heber in the Provo Valley.

The 10 men had left the town of Provo April 29, 1859, heading up the canyon to establish a new settlement. They had heard a good deal of debate on whether or not crops would mature in the high valley of the Provo River. A surveying party which had worked there the summer before had noticed that in July ice formed on water left in a cup over night.

Part way up Provo Canyon, the party of 10 found a snowslide blocking the road. Undaunted, they carried the contents of their wagons across the slide then dismantled the wagons and carried them across, piece by piece.

When they arrived in the valley, they found three men from Nephi, already there plowing the virgin soil. Three other men had attempted to winter in the valley with a herd of cattle, but had been forced to return to Provo in February when their feed gave out.

Settlers continued to arrive in Provo Valley throughout the summer of 1859, and the roots of other communities were planted in the fertile ground.

One enterprising Pioneer loaded his tools into his wheelbarrow to transport them from Provo City to Snake Creek, now Midway. While erecting his mill on the creek, he found protection from night-wandering bears and rattlesnakes by shutting himself up in a box.

Early frosts did some damage to the first summer's wheat crop in the valley. Winter came early and was very severe. The settlers knew that an early spring was essential to the survival of the Provo Valley venture.

On the first Thursday in March, 1860, the Heber pioneers met in one of the log cabins for a fast meeting. "All hands prayed fervently to the Lord," one of them wrote later, "to temper the elements and cause the snow to melt that we might be able to put in crops in the season thereof. And by noon, the

leaves on the north side of the house were dripping water from the snow melting. By the middle of the month the snow was gone." The chronicler said that he had never since seen the snow disappear so quickly.

The struggle to survive continued for some time, though each year the settlers became stronger and better prepared for the difficult winters.

Eventually, substantial churches, schools and homes formed the communities of Provo Valley—communities founded on a willingness to "try and trust to Providence."

